

106 SUCCESS STORY

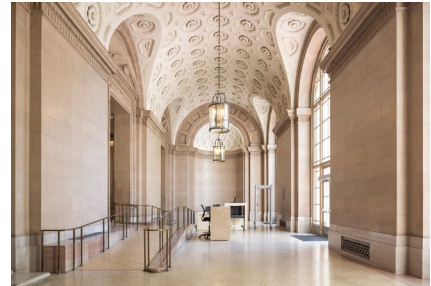
Reinvestment Yields State-of-the-Art Rehabilitation of Landmark Building

San Francisco, California



“This is one of San Francisco’s most cherished buildings. The MOA resulted in an exemplary model for modernizing office facilities for GSA to meet current needs, provide an open and stimulating working environment, while maintaining important historic features both inside and on the building’s exterior. A unique element of the planning process was that GSA made use of the California Historic Building Code, a state document, to meet code-related building standards.”

—MILFORD WAYNE DONALDSON,
FAIA
Former California SHPO



THE STORY

In spring 1945, the United Nations Conference on International Organization took place in San Francisco, within the commanding collection of government buildings and cultural institutions that formed its City Beautiful movement-inspired civic center. The momentous gathering of 850 delegates from 50 nations culminated in the execution of the Charter of the United Nations.

Among the masterpieces that defined this area was the Second Renaissance Revival federal building designed by Arthur Brown Jr., and built in 1934-36 as offices for the Department of the Navy. By 1978, the building was controlled by the General Services Administration (GSA), renamed 50 United Nations Plaza in recognition of the historic events that took place decades earlier, and listed in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing to the surrounding historic district. In 1987, it was designated a contributing structure to the San Francisco Civic Center National Historic Landmark District.

THE PROJECT

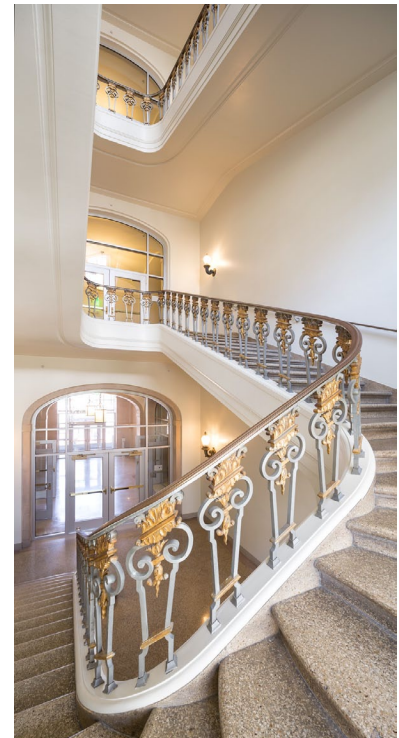
After the Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989, GSA determined costly capital improvements were necessary to bring the building into compliance with building safety and seismic codes. In 2007, GSA considered disposal or a long-term ground lease for the building, but negotiations were unsuccessful. In 2008, GSA commissioned a special program development study, which demonstrated the historic property could be modernized and reused for GSA’s Pacific Rim Regional Office headquarters. Shortly after passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009, GSA’s “shovel ready” rehabilitation and reuse project was allocated necessary funding, and project planning began in earnest.

THE 106 PROCESS

GSA was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires federal agencies to identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have

Photos: Above, Cliff Garten Studio. *Ribbons*. 2013. 50 United Nations Plaza Courtyard; Right, San Francisco Civic Center with United Nations Plaza in center; rehabilitated lobby (photos by Blake Marvin—HKS, Inc.)

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Photos: Above, southeast entrance; Right, rehabilitated stairway (photos by Blake Marvin-HKS, Inc.)

an interest in the fate of the property when adverse effects may ensue. By December 2009, consultation among GSA, the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and the National Park Service resulted in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that addressed GSA's rehabilitation plans; seismic and accessibility upgrades; hazardous materials abatement; and installation of new mechanical, electrical, heating, and plumbing systems.

Following the design review process outlined in the MOA, the parties negotiated project details to minimize removal of character-defining corridor walls to accommodate modern work space needs. In addition, a discreet structural reinforcement system was planned. Finally, the building's existing historic climate-control systems, including operable windows, transoms, doors, and retrofitted steam radiators, became part of a cutting-edge passive ventilation system. The original wood window frames and sashes were restored, while new energy efficient glass was inserted to reduce solar heat gain. Ultimately, the system, paired with photo-voltaic rooftop units, allowed GSA to omit central air conditioning. The historic central courtyard, with a redesigned garden area, provides fresh air and daylight throughout interior spaces.

THE SUCCESS

The design review process outlined in the MOA yielded a project that reused the legacy building for its historic purpose and substantially preserved its features, materials, and finishes. Approximately 98 percent of the existing walls, floors, and roof structure were reused. More than 600 original oak doors were restored, historic hanging corridor lamps were rewired, and original tile floors were refreshed. Lobbies, stairwells, and an office suite once occupied by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz were carefully preserved.

Completed in 2013, GSA's rehabilitation retained a significant building in the federal inventory and achieved comprehensive systems and energy efficiency upgrades, an innovative workplace design, and a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Platinum rating.

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Consulting Parties:

- General Services Administration
- ACHP
- California State Historic Preservation Officer
- National Park Service
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Board
- California Preservation Foundation
- San Francisco Architectural Heritage

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to www.achp.gov



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